Learning for effective teaching

1.3 Participate in professional learning communities networks

Essence >

Leaders and teachers participate in critically reflective inquiry to develop teaching and learning across the school.

1.3 Participate in professional learning communities and networks

In my role as a leader of learning (instructional leader) this means I will:

Seek out and actively participate in professional dialogue about my experiences of leadership for learning

- > Form a small learning group of my peers as a professional learning community
- > Engage in relevant learning opportunities, such as Regional Leaders' days and cluster meetings with my professional learning community

Participate in critically reflective inquiry to develop my leadership practice

- > Use systems-mandated accountability points (eg DIAf site review and validation, performance reporting to my line manager) as opportunities for critical reflection on my leadership practice
- Create and sustain a professional learning community with my school leadership team
- > Embed a learning approach in the day-to-day work of my team
- > Establish specific sessions where our focus is purely professional learning

I will strategically design to:

- Create a climate where teachers can explore ideas and their practice in open dialogue
- > Establish expectations and norms for staff to learn together, share and critique practice
- > Make explicit the difference between professional disagreement and personal conflict
- Encourage and support teachers to participate in professional learning communities within and beyond the school
- > Model participation in professional learning communities
- > Establish effective systems and processes to support 'deprivatised' practice, such as teachers working in collaborative teams, teacher peer moderation of students' work and observing each other's practice
- > Help staff members develop professional language to be able to describe their work explicitly and accurately
- > Deliberately allocate school resources to initiate and support professional learning communities
- > Structure the timetable to allow staff collaborative planning time
- > Allocate a budget to professional learning communities
- > Resource professional learning communities with expertise as needed

Alert

Many professional learning communities 'fail' because they cast their focus as a 'problem' to be solved and assume they will find an answer overnight.

Building a learning community where rich learning occurs takes time and focuses as much on exploration as it does on problem solution.

Effectiveness of Leaders' Learning Circles depends on existing relationships, culture, rapport and an environment where participants can share their beliefs and bring unconscious assumptions to the surface.

Practice check

- Do we actively employ what we know about learning in our own leadership and staff meetings?
- How and how often do I critically reflect on my own practice and set specific goals for my development? Do I have a professional support group?
- How am I modelling being a learning community member with staff? How do I do this with my leadership team?
- How am I actively promoting respectful and trusting relationships?
- Am I monitoring the 'climate' of our meetings? Do we have the right balance of challenge and support?
- Am I actively supporting teachers' involvement in professional learning communities? How?

If teachers engage in professional learning communities and networks, they will ...

- be avid, ongoing learners about their professional work and actively participate in collegiate learning
- learn together by sharing their thinking, practice, programs and responses to students' work
- o reflect, through the learner's lens, on the impact of what they do, say and imply
- seek to clarify their own assumptions and work towards congruence between beliefs and practice
- o understand the role of intellectual conflict in learning, and will not confuse this with personal conflict
- o develop their professional language to describe their work explicitly and accurately

Notes:



Leaders of learning— Food for thought

A professional learning community is a community where we can learn the 'artistry' of teaching.

A community where teachers and leaders provide support and challenge for each other to learn new practices and to unlearn old assumptions, beliefs and practices.

Milbrey McLaughlin

To operate as a professional learning community we had to challenge perceptions of positional power. What we 'grew' to understand was that everyone has personal theories and theories about learning and it's OK to put them on the table and ask questions about them. Initially being challenged about my practice (what I did and why I did it) hurt. I cringed, but eventually I realised there isn't one 'right' way and my job is not to have all the 'right' answers. This was very liberating as it enabled me to be far more creative in my thinking and ask questions to better understand what we did.

Penny Cook

Instruction improves when teachers in a team teach each other the practice of teaching.

The traditional school often functions as a collection of independent contractors united by a common parking lot.

> Robert Eaker. Rebecca DuFour & Richard Dufour

face-to-face team is more than just collectively intelligent. It makes everyone work harder, think smarter and reach better conclusions than they would have on their own.

A successful

James Surowiecki

It is only by subjecting our preferences and projects to the test of debate that we come to understand what we know and we still need to learn. Until we have to defend our opinions in public, they remain opinions ... half-formed convictions based on random impressions and unexamined assumptions.

Mike Schmoker

The teacher teams

carefully deliberate over each step and the best possible sequence of steps in the lesson; how to most effectively introduce and explain the concepts; how much time to devote to practical exercise: and how to assess and adjust during and after each lesson and unit.

Mike Schmoker